

January 19, 2023

Senator Robinson, Chair, Ways & Means Committee  
Senator Wilson, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee  
Senator Mullet, Vice Chair, Capital, Ways & Means Committee  
Senator Nguyen, Vice Chair, Operating & Revenue, Ways & Means Committee  
Senator Schoesler, Ranking Member, Capital, Ways & Means Committee  
Senator Liias, Chair, Transportation Committee  
Senator King, Chair, Transportation Committee

Representative Ormsby, Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Representative Corry, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
Representative Tharinger, Chair, Capital Budget Committee  
Representative Abbarno, Ranking Member, Capital Budget Committee  
Representative Fey, Chair, Transportation Committee  
Representative Barkis, Ranking member, Transportation Committee

Dear Legislative Budget Leaders:

As you work to develop updates for the 2023-25 biennial budgets, there are many areas where it is critical to have a strong funding partnership between the state and cities. Cities share many of the same priorities and funding pressures as the state. City leaders understand that positive revenue forecasts are often offset by increasing costs and continuing economic uncertainty. Higher inflation has impacted every aspect of our ability at both the state and local level to provide services to our residents. We are committed to collaborating with you in partnership to serve the residents of our cities and our state.

As you prepare the supplemental budgets, we ask for your support for the following programs and proposals. We believe they are the key to the success of both the state and its cities, and the well-being of all Washingtonians.

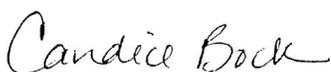
- **Funding for police officer recruitment and retention** – Please support the Governor’s inclusion of \$10 million in grant funding to support cities efforts to hire and retain law enforcement officers.
- **Fully fund the needs of the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA)** – Cities support establishing and expanding regional academies. We ask for two additional BLEA classes in FY 2025 at approximately \$2 million to continue to reduce the backlog of new recruits. Cities also ask that the state return to the historic practice of fully funding the BLEA tuition for new recruits. That tradition ended during the great recession when the state passed off 25% of the tuition costs to the local government. We ask the Legislature to restore that tradition and fully fund BLEA at a cost of approximately \$4.5 million annually.
- **Infrastructure funding** – Retain full funding for the Public Works Assistance Account. Cities are concerned about the Governor’s proposal to divert \$14 million to serve as technical assistance and match for federal broadband funds. This is an unnecessary diversion made at the expense of traditional infrastructure needs. Cities are strong advocates of broadband and broadband funding but do not want to see further erosion of traditional infrastructure investments. Cities also ask that improved access to Climate Commitment Act funds be considered—including but not limited to direct distributions and complementary infrastructure funding to support carbon reduction and climate resiliency.
- **Investing in behavioral health** – Cities support the Governor’s proposed investments in behavioral health and efforts to address the drug and fentanyl crisis. Cities have seen great success with alternative response programs

like co-responder and CARES teams. We ask for an additional \$2 million in grant funding to support these programs that are a critical part of the continuum of behavioral health services.

- **Affordable housing** – Cities support continued efforts to invest in needed affordable housing in our communities. Washington needs over 500,000 lower income units over the next 20 years. Please support and include the investments made possible by Rep. April Berg’s HB 2276 through a new high value real estate transfer tax.
- **Studying first responders PTSD workers compensation claims** - Cities are committed to the health of our first responders and want to do everything possible to treat those suffering from PTSD as well as focus on preventative mental health care. The emerging trends in PTSD claims are concerning. We want to work Labor and Industries to study the data, evaluate the best way to ensure positive outcomes, and work on strategies to avoid additional cases of PTSD. We support funding requests that would help the Department continue this work.
- **Investing in local government transportation systems** – Cities ask for continued support of the Transportation Improvement Board and Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board to maintain our current system assets. The lack of investment, in part, means that city streets (as part of state highways) rated below 45 mph and freeway ramps have been deprioritized, creating significant safety concerns. We urge that you commit to maintaining and providing new transportation investments to meet residents’ needs.
- **Land use planning** – Cities are committed to thoughtful, and community based comprehensive planning under the Growth Management Act. We ask for the state’s continued support to fund this work and avoid new unfunded or underfunded requirements, particularly as many jurisdictions work to complete statutorily required updates.
- **City County Assistance Funds** – The state has provided dedicated assistance to cities with low retail tax bases since the early 2000s when the MVET was eliminated as the source for the sales tax equalization program. Most of the cities receiving these funds are small or very small. The funding for this assistance account comes from a small share of the State’s REET. Decreased REET revenues resulted in a projected loss of about \$10 million for this critical assistance program. These cities would benefit from funding to backfill some portion of this loss.
- **Continued support for childcare assistance** – Cities supports efforts to provide access to quality affordable childcare in our communities to help working families.
- **Local Culvert Corrections** – Please support Governor Inslee’s proposal to enhance funding for the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board with an additional \$22 million in funds. We continue to ask the state to keep a broad vision in mind as you tackle the fish barrier question. It does the fish no good to get past a newly corrected state culvert if they immediately run into a local barrier. We need comprehensive approaches such as represented by the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board.
- **Homelessness response** – Please continue your support of the rights of way initiative that has been successful in helping transition those who are living unsheltered in state rights of way into more stable housing.
- **Model Toxics Control Account** - Cities urge the legislature to unwind the General Fund transfer from MTCA in the biennial budget. Specifically, restoring \$50 million in General Fund for environmental programs and putting the \$50 million in MTCA back for its intended purpose of reducing toxic pollution.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the cities and towns of Washington State. City leaders appreciate your commitment to collaboration as we work together for the best interests of our residents. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership.

Sincerely,



Candice Bock  
Government Relations Director



Deanna Dawson  
Chief Executive Officer

cc: David Schumacher, Director, Office of Financial Management  
K.D. Chapman-See, Legislative Liaison, Office of Financial Management